

CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1. (Presently Amended)
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5 2. (NEW) A method according to claim 1, further comprising:

(e) wherein said distributed data processing system includes a user interface which facilitates (1) gathering of information from potential purchasers and (2) presenting dynamically changing information to said potential purchasers.

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3. A method according to claim 2, further comprising:

(f) utilizing said distributed data processing system to identify a plurality of articles of manufacture which are different from one another and which are available for purchase by said plurality of potential purchasers.

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4. A method according to claim 3, further comprising:

(g) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture are, or will be, located sufficiently physically proximate to one another prior to shipment to justify a consolidation and coordination of loading-for-shipping operations.

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5. A method according to claim 4, further comprising:

(h) wherein each of said plurality of articles of manufacture has particular shipping constraints associated therewith, including at least one of the following particular shipping constraints:

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(1) shipping origin;

(2) shipping destination;

(3) production completion date;

(4) product volume and weight; and

(5) product packaging.

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5 6. (New) A method according to claim 1, further comprising:

(e) providing a trusted intermediary entity which maintains said distributed data processing system, qualifies said potential purchasers for participation, and in part determines what particular articles of manufacture are presented for purchase over
10 said electronic communication system.

7. (New) A method according to claim 3, further comprising:

(g) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture associated with each particular
15 visual representation of a standard shipping container may comprise at least one of the following mixtures;

(1) a mixture of different types of articles of manufacture;
(2) a mixture of articles of manufacture which originate from different suppliers;
(3) a mixture of articles of manufacture which are purchased by different ones
20 of said plurality of potential purchasers.

8. (New) A method according to claim 3, further comprising:

(g) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture associated with each particular
25 standard shipping container may be disparate and unrelated products which are consolidated into a particular standard shipping container based upon the geographic proximity of a plurality of different factories.

5 9. (New) A method according to claim 3, further comprising:

(g) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture associated with each particular visual representation of a standard shipping container are consolidated into a particular shipping container due to an association between particular ones of said plurality of potential purchasers.

10 10. A method according to claim 9, wherein said association comprises at least one of:

- 15 (1) an ad hoc grouping of potential purchasers based mainly on interest in purchasing particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture;
- (2) a grouping of potential purchasers which are affiliated other than through the purchase of particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture; and
- (3) a grouping of potential purchasers which are represented by an administrator.

20 11. (New) A method according to claim 3, further comprising:

(g) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture associated with each particular visual representation of a standard shipping container are consolidated into a particular shipping container due to geographic proximity of delivery destinations of particular ones of said plurality of potential purchasers.

5 12. (New) A method according to claim 3, further comprising:

(g) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture associated with each particular visual representation of a standard shipping container are consolidated into a particular shipping container due to temporal requirements of particular ones of said plurality of potential purchasers.

13. (New) A method according to claim 3, further comprising:

(g) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture associated with each particular standard shipping container are consolidated into a particular shipping container due to production completion dates or date windows of particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture.

14. (New) A method according to claim 3, further comprising:

(g) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture associated with each particular standard shipping container are consolidated into a particular shipping container due to temporal complementarities of particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture.

5 15. (New) A method according to claim 3, further comprising:

(g) wherein particular ones of said articles of manufacture are offered for sale on a conditional basis which is contractually binding on a particular manufacturer if a predetermined condition is satisfied.

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16. (New) A method according to claim 15, further comprising:

(h) wherein said predetermined condition comprises at least one of:

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(1) an order is obtained for a minimum number of units of a particular article of manufacture;

(2) an aggregation of orders is obtained for a minimum number of units of a particular article of manufacture;

(3) offer acceptance time requirements are satisfied;

(4) shipping origin requirements are satisfied;

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(5) shipping destination requirements are satisfied;

(5) shipping container requirements are satisfied;

(6) shipping routes requirements are satisfied;

(7) product delivery timing requirements are satisfied; and

(8) minimum shipping utilization rates are satisfied.

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5 17. (New) A method according to claim 3, further comprising:

(g) providing a shipping management module which is a computer program which receives as input order data, production data, shipping data, container data, and said shipping constraints and which operates to generate groupings of particular ones of
10 said plurality of articles of manufacture which optimally fills at least one or a plurality of standard shipping containers in order to optimize loading efficiency.

18. (New) A method according to claim 3, further comprising:

15 (g) providing a shipping management module which is a computer program which receives as input order data, production data, shipping data, container data, and said shipping constraints and which operates to generate groupings of particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture which fills at least one or a plurality of standard shipping containers in order to optimize shipping and delivery efficiency.

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19. (New) A method according to claim 3, further comprising:

(g) providing a shipping management module which is a computer program which receives as input order data, production data, shipping data, container data, and said
25 shipping constraints and which operates to generate groupings of particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture which fills at least one or a plurality of standard shipping containers in order to optimize simultaneously loading efficiency and shipping and delivery efficiency.

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20. (New) A method according to claim 1, further comprising:

(e) wherein said at least one visual representation of said standardized shipping volume comprises:

(1) at least one geometric icon defining a graphical user interface area;

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(2) a plurality of segments located within said at least one geometric icon, presented in a manner which allows each segment to be distinguished from other segments;

(3) wherein each of said at least one geometric icon represents a separate one of a plurality of standard shipping containers; and

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(4) wherein said interface area in said graphical user interface which defined by each of said at least one geometric icon represents a usable volume within said standard shipping container;

(5) wherein each of said segments represents at least one of (a) utilized space, or (b) available space within said standard shipping container.

52 1. (Presently Amended; Amended Once) A method of selling articles over a distributed data processing system, comprising:

P126 (a) identifying a product utilizing said distributed data processing system,

(b) soliciting purchase commitments from potential purchasers over said distributed data processing system;

(c) accepting contingent offers which depend upon obtaining a predetermined minimum number of offers before acceptance of said offers; and

(d) utilizing at least one visual representation of shipping space available within a standardized shipping volume in said distributed data processing system to communicate over time whether or not sufficient financial commitments have been obtained from said plurality of potential purchasers to fill one or more standard shipping containers.